

In Celebration of  
Diane Shaver Clemens  
For 34 Years of Service

From Her Graduate Students at the University of California at Berkeley  
April 22, 2006

I had an 11:00 AM meeting with Diane concerning my dissertation on the last day papers could be submitted that semester. In similar meetings in the proceeding year or so Diane had always managed to find something that needed correction or development. And, sure enough she found something she didn't like. I did my best to convince her that perfection was only found in the afterlife, but the matter did seem in doubt. (I'm sure her objection, I can't recall the detail, was valid. I did spend a year rewriting the manuscript before I allowed West view Press to publish it.) About 11:45 a woman I didn't know dropped in to keep a lunch date with Diane. She stood listening to proceedings between Inquisitor and Sinner for a few minutes, finding the whole thing rather funny. After a short while the friend said, "Diane, I'm hungry. Sign the damn thing and let's go have lunch." Diane put her pen to paper and I was on my way to California Hall at warp speed feeling as relieved as Benjamin Franklin after securing the French alliance. Now, I think Diane would have signed regardless everything considered. But I've always thought of her mysterious friend as being good fortune personified. She can come back any time she wants.

Things worked out okay. The event described was in 1981, the academic equivalent October 1929, as far as the job market went. My wife had a good career going in the Bay Area and we had a three year old son. The alternative was either leave academics (and do, pray, what?) or try to find a one year position at some noble institution like Nathaniel Bedford Forrest College and hope that someone would die. This was not good. Amazingly in retrospect, Diane devised Plan C. She just happened to know an old Chinese professor who was running a little business college in San Francisco and they needed someone to handle general education. Would I be interested? Well, considering that the job would keep me in academics, keep me in the middle class and keep me married, I accepted after about 30 seconds of consideration. A couple of years later Diane had been talking with a publisher and called me to let me know that Vietnam was "hot" on the market and that maybe I should try to do something with my thesis. Dissertations were not automatically published by any means at that time and I really hadn't pursued the matter. But, what the hell. Diane was right about the market. A year later my dissertation was a book. Three more followed. All are in print and pay royalties. So I've spent my professional life teaching history to undergraduates and writing books about Asian wars and gotten paid for it. That was a good fate for someone like yours truly. So thanks Diane. I owe you one.

Eric Bergerud

Upon arriving at UC Berkeley in 1989 I recall feeling hopelessly unprepared and without support. Diane, I will always view meeting you and Richard as a godsend. I can recall numerous occasions being in Your office having hilarious conversations, and laughing and carrying on, and other students walking in and looking baffled. You never failed to make me laugh or smile. Thank you for everything.

Ron Lopez

It is difficult to know where to begin when I try to describe Diane's awesome qualities as a dissertation advisor, historian, intellectual, and friend. Diane's doctoral students are so fortunate because they benefit from her tremendous knowledge of diplomatic history, her prodding to ask big questions, her respect for her students, the way she encourages them to think critically and independently, and the fact that she cares so much about their work, their intellectual growth, and their careers. But there is more to it than that. Diane and Richard open up their home to their students and make them feel as if they are members of her family. She not only held classes in her home but organized doctoral discussions section where new and advanced doctoral students could share their work. I can say that some of the best meals I had in Berkeley were at Diane's house, and those times were memorable not merely because of the amazing food (thank you Richard!), the drink, and the Bay view, but because of the conversation, which inevitably came back to the state of the world and Diane's brilliant analysis of the latest fiascos of the American empire.

For Diane it wasn't enough to help you through the dissertation. Once it was done she'd be helping you find publishers and taking pride in the book that resulted in a manner that attested to how much she cared about her students. And then she'd pull out all the stops to help get you a job. I remember very distinctly the chair of the search committee which hired me here at NYU speaking with amazement at the letter she wrote on my behalf. He'd never in his entire career of 30 years seen such a long, detailed, and compelling letter of recommendation as the one that Diane wrote -- and that was not because I am so special but because she is.

When I think of Diane I think of intellectual independence and courage. Diane was among the first women to teach in the male bastion that was the UC history department and it took courage and independence to work in that environment. She became a voice for gender and racial equality not only in Dwinelle Hall but in the UC administration when she served as faculty assistant to the chancellor on the status of women -- a title that fails to convey the reality that in that job Diane was always challenging the administration to do more to overcome its exclusionary history, that at best the chancellor was her assistant in that quest not the other way around. With respect to my own activism at Berkeley Diane was the ideal advisor. Even as she was supportive of my work in founding AGSE, championing numerous causes, and editing the editorial page of the Daily Cal in the midst of the student movement to divest UC funds in the apartheid regime, she also called upon me to keep working on my dissertation, and to keep in mind that if the struggle to make history was important so was writing it. And she stood up for free speech and academic freedom in very direct and personal ways. When our TA union's legal case was in process and the deans were furious about our unionization effort they sought to exert political pressure so as to silence me, and Diane protected me, outraged that anyone on campus would dare to challenge free speech -- and especially the free speech rights of one of her students.

On these matters of conscience Diane was totally consistent, from the Ellsberg case and the antiwar movement of the Vietnam era through the many wars that have followed Diane has embodied dissent at its best -- well reasoned, courageous, expressed whether it was popular to do so or not, and exposing the follies of bellicose nationalism. One can only dream of an America that follows Diane's moral compass; for it would be an America without preemptive war, without torture, without the domestic spying and diminution of civil liberty which currently afflict our republic. At times like these I am especially appreciative of Diane's scholarship, her challenge to cold war orthodoxies, her insistence that scholars pursue the truth about the US role in the world. It somehow does not seem enough to say thanks to Diane in a few words, and I think that her students express that sentiment in a much deeper and sustained way through their books, articles, and classes, carrying on in their own way the tradition of critical and independent thought and scholarship that Diane imparted to us.

Robby Cohen

Dear Diane,

Thank you for all your support throughout the years. I always appreciated your willingness to listen and your encouragement through the various stages of my academic career. I wish you and Richard all the best for a long and happy retirement together!

With my very best wishes,

Betty Dessants

Diane and I had, during the last stages of my dissertation writing, what I would call “Encounters of the Spicy Kind”. In those days we both usually shopped at Park and Shop, up on Solano Avenue, and so quite often we would run into one another there. Our main topic of conversation was not history or anything intellectual, but rather the use of spices in cooking. Diane’s knowledge on dozens and dozens of different spices was amazing and I must say that my Red wine oxtail dish improved greatly after these encounters. The mixture of clove and thyme with the red wine gave a gelatine-like oxtail a galactic flavor that I had never managed to accomplish before. And who can forget the pitchers of our homemade peach sangria and bottles of red California wine to wash it all down? And for dessert, what better way to end a meal than with rose petals?

Lisa Dolan

Dear Diane,

CONGRATULATIONS! There is so little that I can say in this brief tribute, but let me begin by thanking you for spiriting me into the PhD program, and to think you and Richard for allowing me to help you create History 16, even after I "spaced" and left a whole box of microfilm on a campus bench! The research, curriculum development, and teaching experience that I gained due to your democratic approach to pedagogy (and the fortification of cheese-bread!) provided the necessary liberty that enabled me develop my pedagogical skills. You allowed me to think outside the box, enabling me to create interdisciplinary courses after graduate School. I have endeavored to emulate your pedagogy with the GSIs and undergraduate students whom I have sponsored. As important were the reading groups at your home, and especially the dinners and late-night sessions at Arch Street. I also treasure memories from our travels together throughout northeastern Turkey, and chuckle to myself when I remember how my (uptight) Koç University 'colleagues' became shocked at our antics, and envious of our relationship! Most importantly of all, is the fact that my best friends today remain those whom I met in your classes. You have done far more than create an academic legacy of scholars. You have sponsored and sustained a community of people who maintain an explicitly ethical epistemology in all aspects of their personal and professional lives. Upon your retirement, I am sure that all of your students will thank you for this. See you in June!

John Drabble



As historians, we're all too used to rifling through other people's correspondence, and know how long a letter can last. But that was brought home to me last year, when a fellow historian mentioned to me, with awe, the letter that Diane had written for my job applications ten years ago. He marveled at its length and its detail; here, he said, was an advisor who really knows her students. That, of course, was not news to her students: Diane knows and cares about us. As one of the many students helped along by Diane, I know that the job letters were a reflection of her loyalty to her students, as people and as historians. From our first long phone calls in admissions season, to the evening workshops she and Richard hosted, to the job letters and support, Diane devoted herself to her students. So from me and from all of us, thanks.

David Engerman

Diane Shaver Clemens is responsible for many things, only some of them attested to tonight by the sheer presence of so many of us, her advisees, around this table. Her devotion to her grads is legendary. Together we will teach tens of thousands of students in the course of our careers. That is not a small influence spreading outward from its origins in Dwinelle Hall.

One of Diane's greatest contributions was to compel an update of Oscar Wilde's observation that "Anybody can make history. Only a great man can write it." When *Yalta* was published by Oxford University Press in 1970, it was one of the first major works of diplomatic history to have been written by a woman. When U.C. Berkeley recognized Diane's achievement by appointing her to the faculty, she was only the third woman professor ever to join the History Department, after Adrienne Koch, appointed in 1958, and Natalie Davis, in 1971. A pioneer twice over, Diane pointed the way for a generation of women to breathe new life into the rather staid field of diplomatic history, where they have played crucial roles in developing new approaches and new subjects.

Diane's own students are a diverse group; we cannot be characterized as a "Berkeley School," like the "Wisconsin School" of Fred Harvey Harrington and William Appleman Williams that did so much in the 1960s to dispel the myth-making of nationalist orthodoxy. Instead, what we have in common can be summed up as innovation, working to dispel an orthodoxy of method: we endeavor to carry on Diane's tradition by breaking new ground.

Our thanks to you and to Richard for bringing us all through the graduate program and beyond, for your enduring support across the years.

Max Paul Friedman

Dear Diane,

There is one memory that will stand out above the many unforgettable and fond recollections that I have of you. I remember waking up one early Fall morning to the insistent ringing of my telephone—it was 6:00 in the morning. “Wake-up Garcia! Wake up! We are under attack!” I stumbled over to my T.V. set turned on CNN and watched a plane plunge into the second tower. Oddly, my first thought was “what the hell are you doing up so early in the morning” but I remembered that you are a nocturnal creature and frequently stay up till the wee hours. In the end it was you who helped me and many others make sense of the incident. You were one of the first to speak out against the Bush administrations backlash by putting together an educational with Angela Davis and others. Your courage was galvanizing, to say the least.

I can’t safely say that I would have finished graduate school without your unwavering support, Diane. In you, I not only found a mentor and guide but a kindred spirit, a rad, and a fellow trouble-maker. As a union agitator and organizer for AGSE (a subversive in the minds of the many lacklusters that ponderously slug down the halls of Berkeley) your office was always a refuge. In fact, considering the nest of “subversives” you have protected and nurtured in 3229 Dwinelle over the years, I wouldn’t be surprised if you found a cache of wires and taps buried beneath the mountains of books and papers that crowd your office.

It was always a pleasure to TA for your courses and watch you and Richard shock the formative minds of your undergraduates with a combination of enlightening lectures and colorful and dramatic slideshows. Your courses always attracted armies of marginalized students at Berkeley, including many students of color who adored you and always a spackling of indignant right-wingers who were compelled to respect you.

Thank you for everything Diane.

Dan Garcia

Path-breaker. Radical. A rabble-rouser. A woman entering and re-shaping a field that was more of an “old-boys network” than my generation can fathom. When I got to Berkeley’s History Department in 1994 I looked for professors who could nurture my passions, political as well as intellectual. I expected Berkeley’s history of radicalism to have been written upon the walls of Dwinelle Hall. Instead, I found it not-so-neatly contained within the office of Diane Clemens. Diane, you helped make me an intellectual home for eight years, providing a space for me to go off on my Chicano historical tangents. (After all, you are no stranger to the historical tangent.) I found a kindred spirit in your tutelage because you are, in the true sense of the word, an ally in the myriad struggles for social change. Hell, Diane Clemens has been a soldier on the front lines of the intellectual wars of the last forty years. You are a friend to the shit-starter because you are one. Those of us who survived our years of graduate education because of your help know what the future generations of learners have lost. I hope retirement gives you and Richard the time to enjoy each other. Read good books, drink fine wine, and travel. Whatever you do, don’t try to organize all the stacks and stacks of historical stuff you two have collected. Save that for the professionals. Congratulations on a legendary career!

Tomás Summers Sandoval

Diane v. "Bob"

I have many stories I could tell about Diane Clemens. One stands out immediately as showing what makes Diane such a remarkable person.

In 1989 at the AHA annual meeting -- the first for me of a series of those stressful yet tedious events -- Diane and I went to the SHAFR reception one evening. The party was in the usual anonymous hotel meeting room where the usual tweed encased professors chatted, as usual complaining about the growing irrelevancy of diplomatic history among their cultural history-inclined colleagues.

Just as we walked toward the door heading directly for the bar, Diane spotted someone I didn't recognize. "Bob," she called out. Bob turned and when he saw Diane, blanched a bit. "So nice to see you," Diane continued. Bob, Diane explained, was Robert James Maddox.

Now it was my turn for shock. After all, Maddox had written *The New Left and Origins of the Cold War*, a hatchet job of a book published in 1973. Maddox's book, which could have been subtitled "revenge of the orthodox." In *The New Left* Maddox had pored through seven revisionist historians' footnotes, including Diane's, finding them guilty of "pervasive misuses of the source material." In Diane's case he had to concede that the argument and evidence of *Yalta* "are crisply argued and compel one's attention." This didn't keep him--without an apparent sense of irony--from accusing her of "overzealousness," concluding that the book "provides a sobering example of the excesses to which 'commitment' can lead." Maddox and his allies didn't let such contradictions get in their way because they weren't interested merely in arguing with the revisionists' conclusions by challenging their evidence, but rather they hoped to destroy their careers by questioning their professionalism. Maddox's argument "smacks too much of the defense of ... Senator Joseph McCarthy's actions," as Warren Kimball wrote in a review of Maddox's book, he "has impugned the ethics and honesty" of Diane and the others. The debate over the history of the cold war in the early 70s was intense and Maddox's book was among the most important academic attacks in a widespread anti-left effort carried out in major newspapers, journals, professional associations, universities, and, most seriously, tenure committees. Lucky for us, Diane survived it all, but I could imagine how bitter or, at the least, irritated it must have made her feel.

I figured Diane had just called Bob over to slug him. I grabbed a drink from the bar and hurried back so I wouldn't miss the fight. Instead I found that Diane had cornered Maddox on a couch. Diane didn't look upset, actually she was happily chatting with Bob about Penn State and life in general. Maddox, on the other hand, looked increasingly like he had to run to the toilet. His face turned pale and he squirmed back into the beige cushions of the sofa under the weight of Diane's relentlessly pleasant conversation.

After a good 15 minutes of this treatment, Maddox found a way to escape, running off into the reception with hardly a nod to me.

I turned to Diane. "How could you sit here and be so pleasant with a guy who tried to destroy your career?" I wanted to know.

"Victor," Diane laughed, then leaned toward me, "we have to show them we are better than they are."

Victor Silverman

When I was thinking about going back to school, I came to Berkeley to gather some impressions beyond the Greek Theater and Telegraph Avenue and before long I was delighted to find myself getting the biggest kick out of this woman in the field I was leaning toward. She made it abundantly clear from the get-go that I had found in ally in the struggle against conformity and cant, and she did it with brio. Simpatico souls will of course find common ground, but with Diane what I took away was her willingness to upbraid the powers that be with such infectious delight that you could not mistake where she stood. She gave me to understand that she shared the idea that history is a part of a big conversation in which the truth must be defended with full vigor, and decorum be damned if it served only to shroud honest disagreement in temporizing contingencies. The Cold War drew us together, and our common interest in the release of culture into the straight jacketed field of diplomatic history kept the battle flag flying as the reactionary counterattack on “political correctness” challenged the opening of the globalizing American narrative to long-muffled voices and histories. The Quincentennial clash fought mostly by people in hospitable sub-disciplines also included people like Diane, who, yes, was in hospitable Berkeley, but in taking on the task of presenting a decidedly critical perspective on American History in the now “required” History 16, brought the battle to what passes at Berkeley for the masses. Diane absorbed the worst blows the distant haters could fling at the “PC” version of reality, especially those who would dare make powerful counterclaims to the myths under challenge and the strategic silences in which they were enmeshed. I will always think of Diane as a comrade, one too sure of the value of that word to mind the smirks it provokes from those across that cultural and political divide.

But that’s just a piece of the Big Picture story. What really separates Diane from the pack is the zest for life she shows away from those high-profile battlefields -- her love for a good party, a hearty meal, a hilarious story in which she manages to be both bold protagonist and victim of life’s circumstance. It’s the fact that she takes on the world as fearlessly and as joyfully as she does that makes it so easy to envision her inhabiting those tales, and what makes it so fun to hear them. It is also the way she takes care of her family, her friends, her students. Whether it was a last-minute request for a letter issued from some hut in Southeast Asia or a recommendation for a good chiropractor, Diane has always been there with the goods, toiling to gild the lily just that one bit more, or make that connection to fight that pain. I can say with gratitude and appreciation that she has earned her status as Queen Bee of our little historical hive.

It’s impossible to capture the best of Diane in a single story, so I’ll just settle for one that illustrates her indomitable spirit. We were on Maui in 1995 for the AHA PCB, and I had rented a car and obtained a lead on a supposedly excellent snorkeling spot a ways down the road from the comforts of the Sheraton. Ever the willing adventurers, Diane and Richard agreed to come

along for an underwater look-see, but when we got there, if indeed we ever were in the “there” imagined as our destination, it turned out that the only way to access the snorkeling zone was to traverse a broad expanse of very shallow water filled with sharp-edged coral and barnacles, walking flippered across the crunchy perils underfoot. Now Diane is about the same age as my mom, and there’s no way I can imagine my mom even agreeing to attempt the task, let alone accomplishing it, but there was Diane, ready to take my arm as a crutch and make it, hell or low water, across that extended stretch of jagged obstacles. Sure, she complained the whole way about my qualifications as an island tour guide, but it was with that tone that more or less practiced the joy she would later take in telling the story herself. “I’m going to be cut to ribbons! Watch out! What kind of a beach is this? Who told you this was the best place?” But you know what? In a few minutes she was past the hard part, into the deep water, at ease with the fish and the sea, and past it (until the exit phase, in the fading dusk, when the danger of a spill was that much greater -- but it’s always easier when you know you’ve already beaten a foe once, as Diane seems to have born knowing). On the way back to the hotel, we assessed the snorkeling spot as pretty nice, save for the difficulty getting in and out. That was the part Diane had the most fun talking about, though. After all, she had – as she always would, in way or another – Overcome. May she long continue to do so, and may we all inherit that fighting spirit, no matter how sharp the shoals or how long the odds. For showing us the way, Diane, thank you.

PS – Richard, ever the stoic, never complained, and proved a remarkably adept figure in the water, to boot. This is Diane’s retirement fete, but somehow it just doesn’t seem right to let the moment pass without noting what a great partner in this inimitable enterprise Richard has been, and how much he, too, will be missed by the students and that he, too, will remain a beloved figure from this chapter in the history of History at Berkeley. To two heads being better than one! (And as many heads as possible being best of all? That’s a Berkeley story for another day, when the mysterious order of the Histonians will honor a certain patron who’s probably just as soon skip the saint part. )

Chris Vaughan

In my very long career as a graduate student, I have worked with many professors. Professor Clemens stands out because of her loyalty to her students. When I first came to Berkeley, she drafted me to serve as her reader for her legendary first semester course on U.S. foreign policy. "Why, me?" I despaired, for I was very green.

I found dealing with the undergraduates to be very intimidating. Even worse, a few of the undergraduates did not enjoy dealing with me, either. Shortly before the final, one student, in collusion with some classmates, addressed an e-mail to me and to the entire class complaining that my grading was too harsh. I was so mortified I did not even want to show up for the final.

At the final, I returned graded term papers when the students turned in their exams. Professor Clemens asked to see the term paper of my critic in cyberspace. I had given him a B-. She wrote on his paper: "I would have given you a D, Diane Shaver Clemens."

Lubna Zakia Qureshi



With so many good memories since 1990 both on and off campus it's difficult to select just one, but a relatively recent event stands out in my mind: the thunderous applause Diane received from a packed audience at Wheeler Auditorium in February 2002 following her talk on civil liberties and academic freedom for the panel "The New McCarthyism" (the other speakers were Angela Davis and Jennifer Terry). Having Diane back at the helm/podium to share her wit and wisdom on such an important contemporary topic after overcoming extremely challenging health issues was just epic, and the response of the crowd made me quite *verklemt* indeed. In fact, it still does, so I won't be recounting this one at the dinner. ;) I love you Diane!

David Yaghoubian

For me it was two moments. The first was ten-cent phone call. I was tottering on the edge of dropping out of graduate school, disillusioned with the whole experience and sensing a life failure that might send me down a course that would not even have ranked as one of the lesser “ifs” of history. Diane Clemens had literally just arrived at Berkeley, had not even finished unpacking (although I seem to remember that it eventually took her longer than the Great Patriotic War to unpack). She had never seen my face or heard my voice, or read a word of my writ. That phone call lasted about an hour. When it was finished, our lives were linked; Diane Clemens pushed and guided and commanded me to a doctorate, to a career in government that has lead me not just to study and appreciate our discipline, but also to live it. The second moment came at the end of my *ten-year* graduate school career. My thesis was all but done; I went to Diane’s office to get her signature to bring to closure many long hours of labor with her. She asked me, “Why are you here?” I said “To get your signature on my thesis.” And Diane, in her all-too-familiar, get-right-to-the-heart-of-the-matter style said, “What’s your big hurry?” But thanks to her, I have had experiences that, as the grandson of a coal miner and the son of steel mill worker, I never dreamed of. Because of Diane’s mentoring, I found myself in the counsels of policy and war with several generations of our country’s leaders---good and bad. I have traveled the world as a public servant and diplomat. Yet none of those experiences---none of them---are so firmly and so personally wedded to my memory as that one simple phone call, that one-hour conversation, and then that one little parting phrase. Diane, thank you for being that voice on the other end, that listened so well and then spoke so clearly.

John J. Yurechko